



City of Seattle
Dept. of Planning and Development
Northgate Stakeholders
Letter to Thornton Creek Alliance
from Mayor Nickels, Dec. 14, 2004

Gregory J. Nickels
Mayor of Seattle

December 14, 2004

Merilee Catero, President
Thornton Creek Alliance
P.O. Box 25690
Seattle WA 98125

John Lombard
Thornton Creek Alliance
10801 12th Ave NE
Seattle WA 98125

Dear Ms. Catero and Mr. Lombard:

Thank you for your recent letter about the Northgate Civic Center project rain garden proposal. I appreciate the commitment that many in the Northgate area have made to protecting and restoring Thornton Creek. I am committed both to protecting Thornton Creek and to seeing the Northgate Community Center, Park and Library, completed without further delay.

Because construction bids for the Northgate Civic Center this summer were significantly higher than the project budget, I proposed, and Council later adopted, a \$1 million addition to the project budget. Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Seattle Public Library also added some funding. However, some additional cuts were needed to bring the project cost in line with the budget. The rain garden is one of these items being deleted from the Northgate Community Center because our revised approach provides better benefits to Thornton Creek and is more cost-effective. In determining the best stormwater approach under the revised budget, Parks has conducted the cost-benefit analysis that you requested.

The rain garden was included as part of the original project design to reflect the City's desire to protect our environment and to have visible, educational and "green" project elements wherever feasible and cost-effective. More recent information about the site soils raised geotechnical concerns that the rain garden could cause over-saturation of the soils and undermine the community center building foundation. Redesign of the rain garden with a geo-membrane liner to protect the building foundation would make the project more costly to build and would also significantly reduce the ability of the rain garden to infiltrate stormwater. The estimated cost of the redesigned rain garden escalated from \$37,000 to \$78,000 while benefits of treating the parking area runoff were reduced substantially.

The good news is that the Northgate Civic project will reduce the existing impervious surface by 30%. The City voluntarily upgraded the stormwater system to provide water quality treatment of the storm runoff from the parking lot and to detain and treat the stormwater from 5th Avenue. The project will feature detention capacity for a 100-year storm event, water quality treatment and, and if costs remain affordable, rainwater harvesting. Rainwater harvesting is an innovative way to conserve water by collecting and treating storm runoff during rainy weather and using it to water

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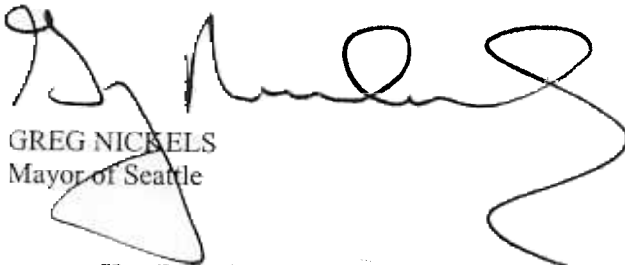


landscaping during the dry season. This stormwater would be further cleaned by the plants and soils as it would by the rain garden. Parks has determined that these stormwater treatment methods will clean and detain significantly more drainage area than the rain garden would have, and they provide greater stormwater benefits for less cost.

Together, these elements meet and exceed the City's stormwater standards. We are going above and beyond requirements because of our commitment to protect Thornton Creek. None of these measures to protect Thornton Creek exists today.

I have asked Erin Devoto, Parks Planning and Development Director, to arrange a meeting with you to present more information and to answer any further questions regarding the Northgate civic project and the rain garden. Again, thank you for your letter and your continued interest in Thornton Creek and Northgate revitalization.

Sincerely,



GREG NICKELS
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Ken Bounds, Director ~~Seattle Parks & Recreation~~
Deborah Jacobs, City Librarian Seattle Public Library
Erin Devoto, Seattle Park & Recreation
Alex Harris, Seattle Public Library
Seattle City Council
Janet Way, Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund
Kathy Minsch, Thornton Creek Oversight